

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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*The only UK magazine dedicated
to vintage coin-operated amusement machines*

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Editorial

Well, here we are with the October issue – not quite as early in the month as I would have liked, but certainly an improvement on recent performance! Anyway, entry forms for the Coventry auction are included, so start filling them in and get them back to me ASAP. Please remember the closing date for entries is Monday 7th Nov. We're slightly re-branding the event this year (not that anyone's likely to notice)! It has previously been called.....'show and auction'.....because we had always hoped that it would evolve into more of a show, with the auction forming the focal point. OK, it was never going to be Jukebox Madness, but we hoped that we would have a good number of sellers, and that that number would grow. Actually, the reverse has been the case, with just me promoting the magazine and one other seller in attendance last year. So we're scrapping the sales tables (with the exception of Tony and me) and the event will now just be a coin-op auction; albeit the biggest in the country! Anyway, more about the auction on the following pages.

Now, take a close look at the picture on the front cover. It's a small section of a fantastic picture Robert Rowland sent me to accompany his article in this issue (see page 10). Can anyone identify the two machines perched on top of the radiator? I think the one being played is possibly a German **Running Hare**, although I'm not 100% certain. But what is the one on the left? If you have any ideas on either machine, please let me know.

Well, that's about it for now

Until next time

All the best

Jerry

Coventry '11

Yes, we're fast approaching the big one! For those of you who have not attended before, the 'Coventry auction' as it has become known, is organised and presented by fellow collector Jeremy Clapham and me, and has become firmly established as the biggest event in the slotties' calendar. The auction is held in a very pleasant social club, with good amenities (bar, food etc.) and of course, ample free parking.

Perhaps the aspect of which we're most proud is charging a commission of just 6% to sellers and buyers alike, and we don't believe any other similar auction matches us! It does have a downside though – we don't make a great deal of money! The way we raise a little extra revenue is to charge an entrance fee by way of a catalogue. I know most of you understand this and consider it perfectly reasonable (although there will always be a few who think they should get in for nothing, get free refreshments, do their own deals in the car park etc. etc.). Anyway, in order to raise just a little more this year (and thus maintain the commission at 6%), I'm making a small change. In previous years, each catalogue has admitted two persons, but will now only admit one. So if you're attending with your wife, friend or someone else, they will need to pay for a ticket, which will be available on the day at just £3 (please do not order tickets in advance).

So, what of the auction? Well, as I stated above, it is the biggest event of its kind in the UK, and now even attracts interest from Europe. It is the one event in the year where you will find the greatest number of vintage machines and the greatest number of collectors all in one room. Wall machines, one-armed bandits, Bryans machines, electro-mechanicals, spares, books and paperwork – it will all be there. It is the event that no collector or enthusiast of vintage coin-operated machines should miss.....make sure you don't!

So fill in those forms, order your catalogue and.....

See you on 27th November

Central England

Vintage Coin-op Auction

Sunday 27th November 2011
Coundon Social Club, Coventry CV6 1GP

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*** * * * ***

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Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update October 2011

Last issue I reported that we submitted our Stage 2 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund in July. I wanted to tell you a little more about it in this issue.

The application is actually the result of 18 months development work funded by our Stage 1 HLF grant to develop an extensive set of plans for the park. This involved working with project managers, English Heritage, The Princes Regeneration Trust, engineers, operators, rides specialists, architects, landscape architects, access experts, designers, national archives, historians, conservation groups, learning providers, tourism, partnering organisations, stakeholders, community groups, volunteers, the press and media.

The resulting surveys and reports were used to produce a comprehensive Business Plan, the Activity Plan (learning, participation, training, employment and volunteering), Design Plan (rides selection, park layout, landscaping, buildings and interpretation), Conservation Management Plan, Rides Report, Maintenance Plan, Engineering & Sustainability and Delivery Plan.

Running parallel to development has been our programme of events and activities, such as Carter's Steam Fair, John Lawson's Circus, the Daredevil Stunt Show, Quadrophonia, The Battle of Sound, Saucy Seaside Postcard, exhibition, the classic Pinball Parlour, English Heritage Open Day, Cultural Olympiad, workshops, talks, tours, projects with schools and colleges as well as promotion and profile raising and the day-to-day administration of the project.

The HLF Board will consider the application in November and, if successful, we will have confirmation of Stage 2 funding shortly after. This will provide the final stage funding to allow us to commence physical work on stage1 of the phased scheme.

Funds will be released once the Compulsory Purchase Order served on the current site owners by Thanet District Council has concluded.

As also reported last issue, our project partners, Thanet District Council, served a Compulsory Purchase Order on the current site owners, Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company (MTCRC) on the 3rd June 2011.

The Council has now received objections from MTCRC and its associated companies. This means the CPO will go to Public Inquiry. TDC is currently preparing the necessary statement and documentation required for the Inquiry. The Inquiry will be held in the second week of January.

Meanwhile urgent works to the cinema building are now in progress. Coombs (Canterbury) Ltd took over the site at the beginning of July and will remain on site until December. This means access is restricted so it is unlikely that we will be running events and activities on site until this work is complete and the CPO concluded. The Scenic Railway is awaiting urgent work to begin. A quantity surveyor has been instructed to produce a bill of quantities, after which tenders will go out for the various works that need doing.

Nick Laister

Chairman, The Dreamland Trust

Jan Leandro (Audience Development Officer)

www.dreamlandmargate.com

www.savedreamland.co.uk

RERELEASED FOR 2011:

Townsend's: A Showman's Story

by Kay Townsend

Out of print for a number of years, but now reprinted with new photographs, more pages and in hardback. This is the fascinating story of the Townsend family.

Richard Townsend & Sons were West Country showmen and this book is about how their life evolved and how a young man called Richard met a young lady called Kate Forse, and their struggle to build a business through two World Wars and the depression.

It also includes details and images of their transport.

ISBN Number: 978-0955359552

Format: Hardback

Number of Pages: 101

Publication Date: 2006 (2011 reprint)

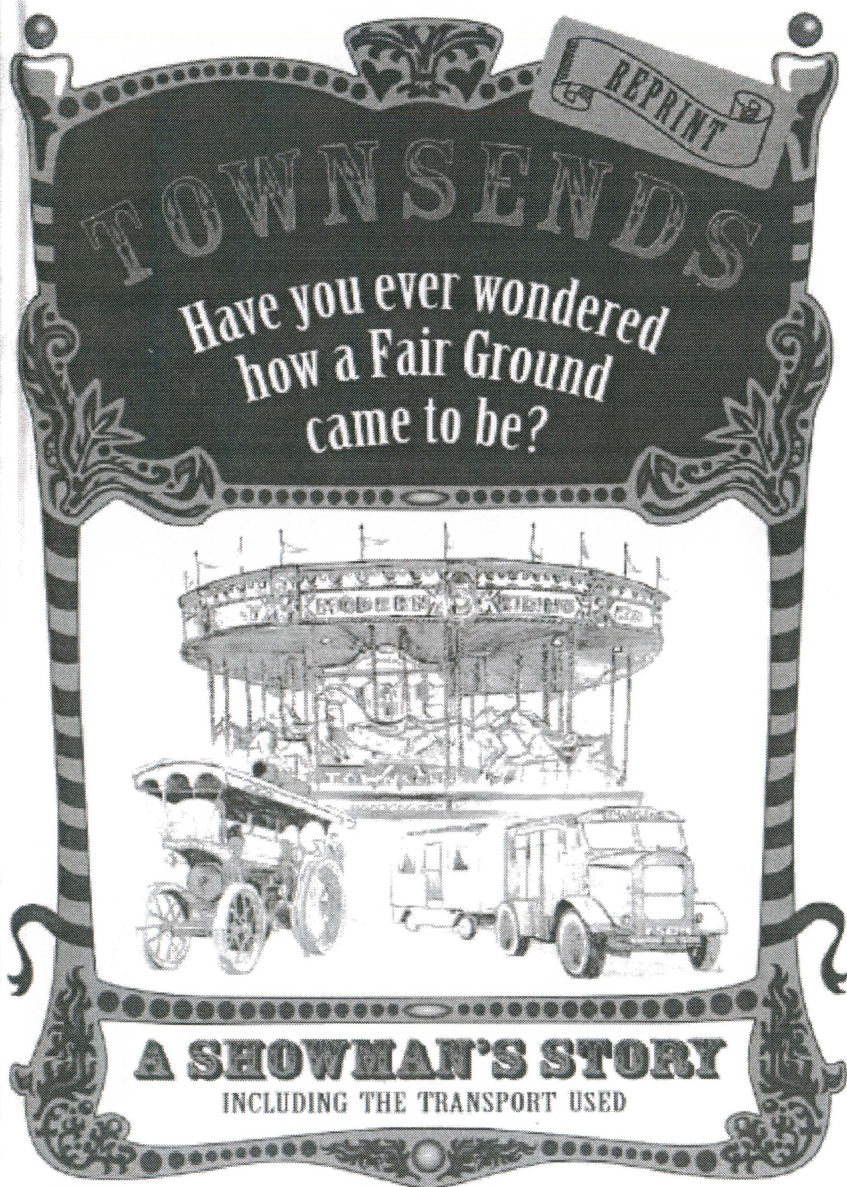
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Our Price: £15.00

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Before My Time Part Two

By Robert Rowland

Here we have the second part of the story from my good friend David Lascelles, of his schoolboy adventures around the seaside amusement arcades in Mablethorpe during the 1950s

Dried peas – the crane saga

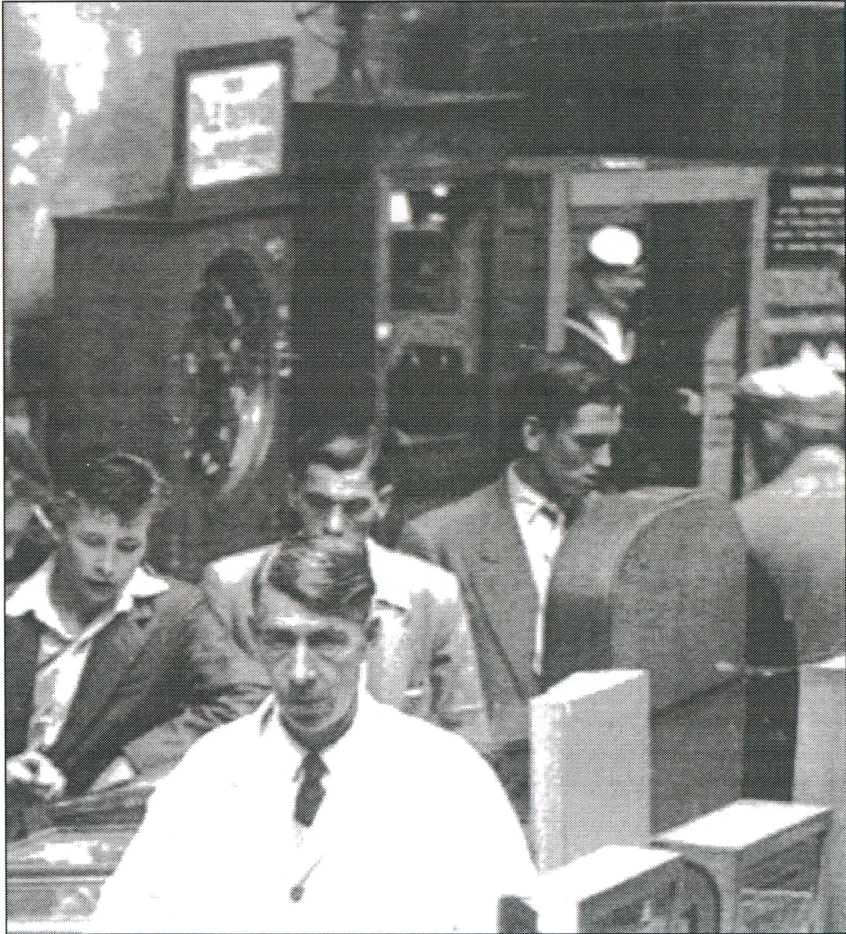
One type of machine that was high in popularity during the 1950s was the crane. This novelty machine, in its various styles, would deliver a huge variety of prizes (with the necessary skills), from combs, plastic broaches, flashy rings, to bazookas, pan pipes, and those plastic birds that you filled with water and blew the tail to make them warble. The prizes were attractively arranged, many standing upright in a two-inch deep sea of dried peas. The prizes were deposited down a chute into the collection box below, the accompanying peas falling through into tins below, to be re-used.

One popular craze among us boys back in those days was peashooters, inspired I suppose by such revolutionary publications as the Beano and Dandy. Great fun, but used safely, never towards the eyes etc. Peas were a bit scarce, and of course the cranes were our main source of supply. The system was to block the small outlets in the prize box with things like tissue paper, pellets or plasticine. We would then go round later to collect the accumulated peas for ammo. (The punters in the main would just make off with the prizes).

Being barred from an arcade during the summer holidays wasn't ever so pleasant, even though we realised it was the usual outcome from undesirable activities should you get discovered. But as one of a group, it was frustrating to be hovering about outside whilst your pals were inside playing the machines. On one particular occasion two of us, being on the outlawed list, were outside one of the arcades. A few yards inside stood a lollipop crane; a free-standing single unit, as opposed to the large six sider at the far end of the arcade (the bigger, more productive cranes were too far inside enemy territory to risk a raid – the single one was easier.)

Left, 'Jacksons Radio' arcade in Mablethorpe, c. late 1950s. This is the very arcade referred to above – note the Bryans six-sided crane towards the back of the arcade. I've printed this sideways to make it as big as possible. Some blown-up sections are included throughout Robert's article.

Sods' law then manifested itself in the image of Noel, resulting in the usual clip on the ear and marching orders back out into the street, ear still stinging. In no-mans land, my colleague and I lined up and let fly a couple of peas in Noel's direction. He, by this time, was sitting on his perch, chin resting on his folded arms on the jukebox. As luck would have it, my pea hit Noel on the right ear. You could tell he didn't like it, because in an instant he'd vaulted over between the two pintables and was approaching at a frightening rate. We ran down the high street and eventually got ourselves lost in the crowd. We found refuge in another safe arcade, and for many weeks, kept wisely clear of Noel's arcade.



*Three floor-standing machines:
Ahrens Pile Driver, what appears to be a large working model and a Laughing Sailor.*

The tale of the pinball glass

Idleness can be the mother of disaster, certainly this proved to be the case in a certain arcade (The Empire). In the mid 1950s, machine attendants, perhaps to save themselves work, 'forgot' to secure the nuts on the bolts that held down the wooden strip at the front of a pintable glass. In the event of a stuck ball or guide spring, the usual procedure should have been: unlock and open the front door, remove the cash box, place hand inside, unscrew the nuts from the retaining bolts, lift off the wooden strip, slide out the glass, unstick what was stuck and then do everything in reverse. Not so in this case. With the long bolts being devoid of nuts, just lift the wooden strip up and slide down the glass. No problem.



A row of (mainly allwin) wall machines. L to R: Brenner Ball Past the Arrow, Shefras Chocolate allwin, Allwin Deluxe, Bryans Payramid, BMCo allwin, two Saxony allwins with top pediments and one unidentified allwin.

Our discovery happened one day when we were (I suppose that you would call it loitering) in the arcade, near the jukebox. It must be stated that the arcade was in its early stages, a large droughty former roller rink with avenues created by suspended giant sheets of hessian sacking, the machines lining the route or residing in various nooks and crannies. All very spooky. One of our little crowd, who was picking about with the machine edging suddenly announced that the bolts would lift out.....and an idea was born!

Creeping stealthily to the end of the sacking avenue to make sure that Harold was safely behind the cash desk, we slid back the glass and tap tap tapped with a pencil on the score buffers. I think you needed to attain 12,000 to win 3d and 16,000 to get 6d. So having 'won' 6d and the glass having been replaced, somebody went to fetch Harold to verify how well we'd done, and he paid out the due tanner. Each quarter of an hour or so, one of us would nip round to claim a win, 3d here, 6d there, trying not to be too greedy. However, the rate of pennies exiting the cask desk must have been a little out of the ordinary; so much so, that Harold decided to satisfy his curiosity.



*Early (pre flipper) electro-mechanical pin tables
and Rotary Merchandiser in the left foreground.*

Central England Vintage Coin-op Auction

Coundon Social Club, Coventry CV6 1GP
Sunday 27th November 2011

Auction Entry Form

Please give details below of the items you wish to submit for the auction. Give brief but concise descriptions such as: 'Oliver Whales Easy Perm allwin, very good working order on old penny play.' If you have a large number of entries and need more room, continue on a separate sheet of paper. Fill in your personal details on the reverse of this form, order your catalogue, then return to: Jerry Chattenton, 10 Bedford Road, Dartford DA1 1SR. Please try to include pictures of all machines, which can either be included with this form or emailed separately. We will try to include as many as possible in the catalogue. Email pictures to jerry.mmm@tiscali.co.uk

Important: All entries for the auction must be received by 7th November

Item description	Reserve

Address:

.....

Email:

£

£

£

ALL MONIES MUST BE PRE PAID

Please make cheques payable to: Mechanical Memories Magazine,
and return to: Jerry Chattenton, 10 Bedford Road, Dartford DA1 1SR

Please note: It is accepted practice for the auctioneer to sell 'within a bid' if a lot does not quite reach its reserve. If you do not want us to do this, and your reserve is the absolute lowest at which you are prepared to sell, mark it **Firm**.

An entry fee of £2 is payable on all lots with a reserve.

A 6% Seller's premium will be applied to all successfully sold lots.

This event is organised and promoted by Mechanical Memories Magazine.

Enquiries: Jerry 07710 285360 email: jerry.mmm@tiscali.co.uk

Suddenly, there he was in the alleyway with a face like a bag of spanners, and the glass was out, full stretch with Roland holding it. The rest of us cleared the door in line abreast. Poor Roland just stood there petrified, probably (and rightly) calculating that dropping the glass would have put Harold into super-drive, with the inevitable outcome. So he carefully handed the end of the glass over and was gone. To be honest, I don't recall whether Harold actually caught up with him; he didn't need to, fear was enough. So that put the Empire out of bounds for the rest of that season.

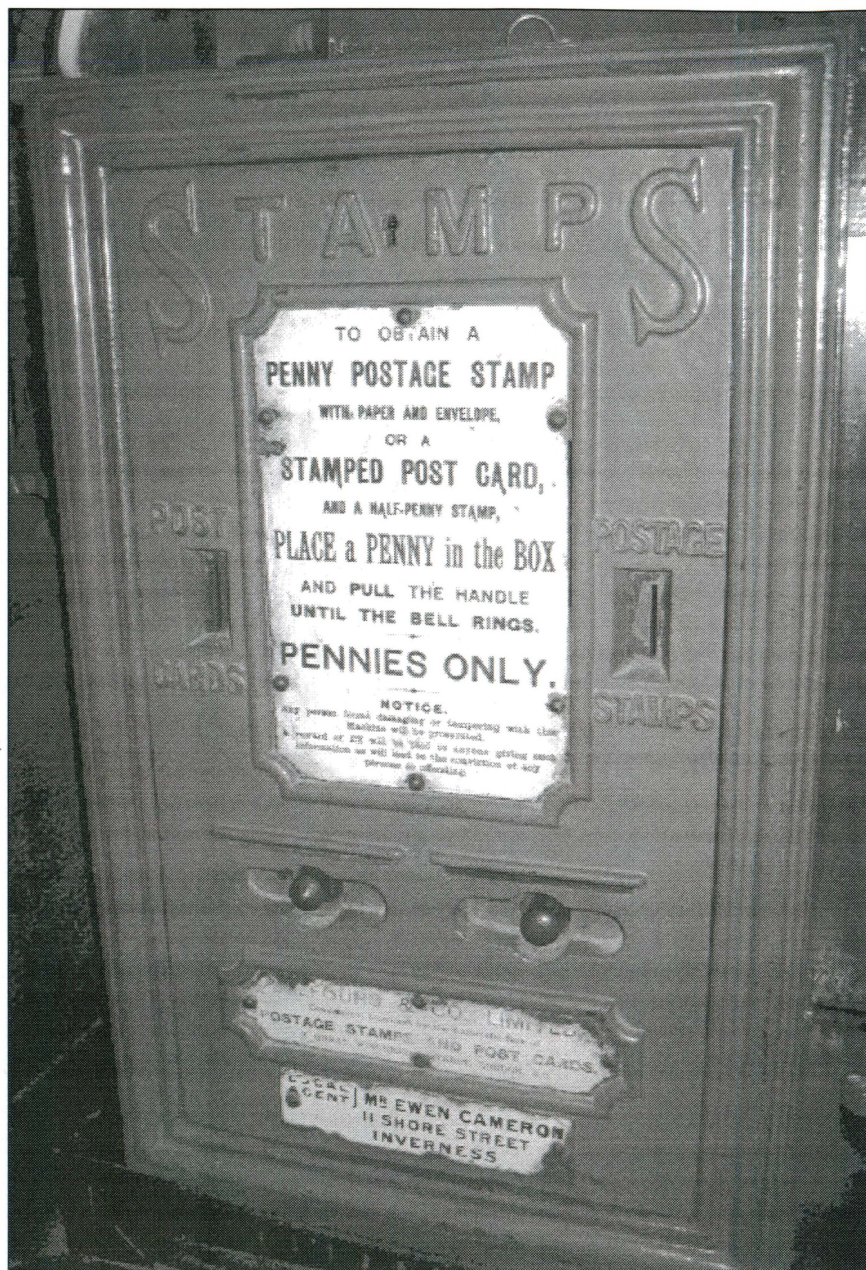
Many thanks to my friend David for sharing his memories of the 1950s Mablethorpe arcades with me and the readers of Mechanical Memories Magazine.

Robert Rowland

Editors Note:

Thanks to Robert for supplying me with such a great picture of 'Jacksons Radio' We all know that internal shots of old amusement arcades are extremely rare, but they do exist. So if any readers have any such photographs, even if they show just a few machines, do please let me have copies so that I can publish them in the magazine. You don't have to send prints, just email them. But do please email high resolution so that I can 'blow up' sections, as I have done with Robert's picture.

Jerry



Balfours & Co

Postcard, Letter and Stamp Vending Machine

By Kevin Gowland

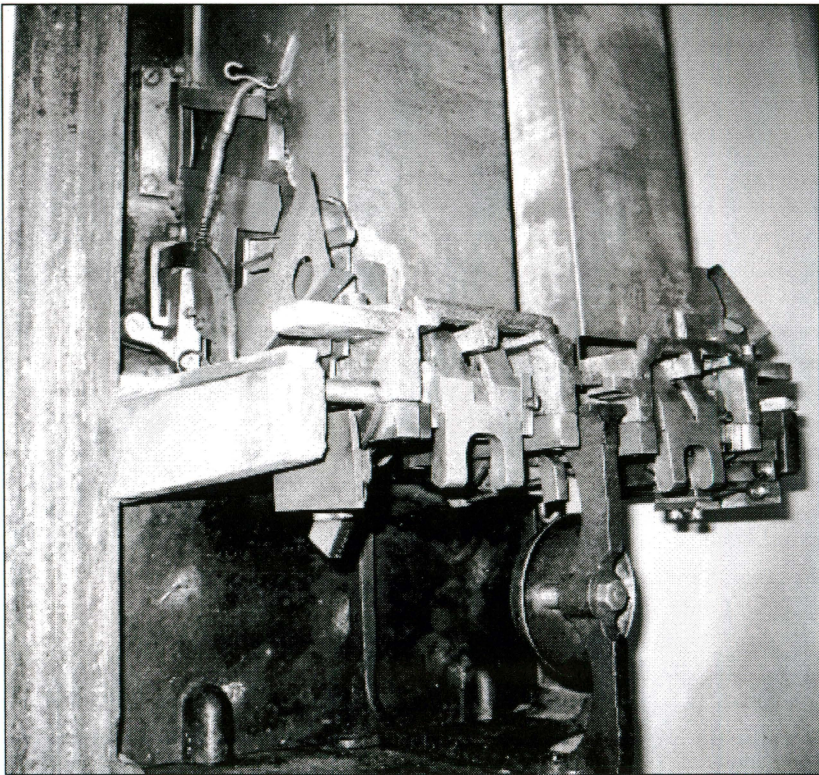
I know that readers are principally interested in coin operated amusement machines, but I thought that some might be interested to read about a relatively early coin-operated vending machine with a bit of a story to it.

Several years ago I came across a cast iron postcard vending machine on ebay. Although I had seen many Royal Mail wall mounted cast iron letter boxes, and this had a superficial similarity to those, it wasn't a machine which I had ever encountered. It looked pretty old, but I had actually just recently been to an antique fair where reproduction frontages of Royal Mail letter boxes had started to appear, so I assumed that it was another of those surfacing. Anyway, I watched it on ebay and contemplated bidding on it. Ultimately, I didn't bid as I was wary of it. Afterwards, I thought I had slipped up on the basics and I really ought to have asked the seller the obvious question about whether or not it was genuine rather than just assuming that it probably was not.

Normally, that would have been the end of the story. However, two months later the same item appeared again. My initial reaction was that my first thought that it was a reproduction was probably right and borne out by the fact that it, or another copy, now appeared. Nevertheless, this time I thought I would ask for information about it to see what the seller had to say about it. Well, the seller came back affirming that it was a genuine old machine. I ended up speaking with him by phone and I suggested that it was probably early 1930's; he said that he thought that it was possibly earlier and possibly as early as 1900. This surprised me, but not knowing anything about the machine, I took the view that '1930's is good, 1900 would be even better'.

Anyway, I decided to bid and it ended up that I won the item. I met up with the seller to collect the machine and he told me that if I wasn't happy with it, then there was another guy who wanted the machine. Apparently this other guy had meant to bid on the machine, but missed the auction deadline by a minute or so (who hasn't been there!), so he was keen to step in if I was in any doubt about it. As soon as I saw the machine I knew that I definitely wanted it and I was in no doubt that it was an original old piece.

The machine basically comprises a cast iron door fitted into a cast iron frame which would have been mounted into a wall. The machine features two penny slots. Depositing a penny into the left slot would enable the customer to obtain a stamped postcard and a half penny stamp; depositing a penny into the right slot would provide a penny postage stamp, an envelope and a sheet of writing paper. As I understand it, each bundle would be supplied in a made up package. The customer would pull on a rod handle to obtain their goods, which would be dispensed via a slot above the appropriate rod handle, and a bell would ring to indicate that the machine was in operation. The machine features three enamelled plates. The main one states what the machine supplies and gives instructions for use. It also carries a warning that anyone found damaging or defacing the machine was liable of a fine up to £2; which was probably a considerable sum back in 1890. The second enamel carries the Balfours and Co. name and address and cites that the company is licensed by the Government for the automatic supply of stamps and postcards. The final enamel gives the name of the local agent for the management of machines.



The well-engineered and robust release mechanism.

There was a bit of story too about the machine. The seller had bought it along with a stamp collection. He had committed some of the collection, including this machine, to an auction house. However, when he turned up at the auction house they had basically told him that they dealt with stamps, not boat anchors, and they refused to accept it into the auction! So, he then contemplated what to do with the machine. He looked at it and decided that, actually, it wasn't too bad and had a bit of character about it. So he hit on the notion of having it mounted into a wall in his living room. He arranged for a builder to come around and give a quote. Well, the crux of it was that by the time the builder took out the brickwork, put in a lintel and installed the machine, he would be looking at a bill for the best part of £500. It was at this point that the seller listed the machine on ebay!

This brings us to the point in the story where I came in and spotted the machine on ebay. As I said, I looked at the machine, but ultimately didn't put in a bid. The ebay buyer of the machine was apparently very pleased with his purchase. He enthusiastically showed a picture of his latest, yet uncollected, treasure to his wife. He told her of his great idea to mount the machine on a wall in their living room. Sadly for him, his wife didn't see it as he did. So, defeated, later that day, he contacted the seller and said "re list it on ebay, if I take a loss, I take a loss". Well, this was the point where I saw the machine for its second time and contacted the seller to find out a bit more about it and became seriously interested in it when he expressed the view that it might go back as far as 1900.

As I said, I ended up buying it and it was from that point that I investigated and found out a little more about the machine and its history. The machine had been marketed by a company called Balfours & Co, London. I actually found that the machine was earlier than either I or the seller had thought and, in fact, dated back to around 1890. I discovered that in 1890 the Company had been approved to site its machines in Basildon and by 1891 the Company was advertising for local agents in areas of Scotland. Machines were also sited, through an appointed agent, in Pembrokeshire. Indeed, I also discovered that, somewhat remarkably, one of these machines remains sited in that County to this day.

Sadly, for one reason or another, the machine did not really have too much of a chance of success. Balfours & Co were in receivership by 1893 and *The Times* carried various notices around that period for the winding up of the Company. I assume that the venture failed completely at this time. It would have been open for someone to buy the Company's assets and continue the enterprise, but I have not been able to find any evidence that this happened. So, it seems that, but for one known sited survivor and perhaps a handful of examples of the machine in private hands, this early vending machine disappeared from view almost as quickly as it arrived.

If anyone knows anything else about the machine or the Company, or indeed the packages which the machine dispensed, it would be interesting to add a bit more detail to the story.

Kevin Gowland

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Slot Machines of Yesteryear - Watling Operator's Companion.

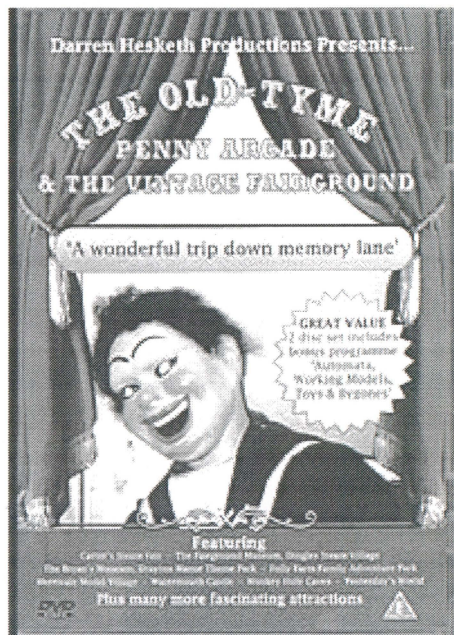
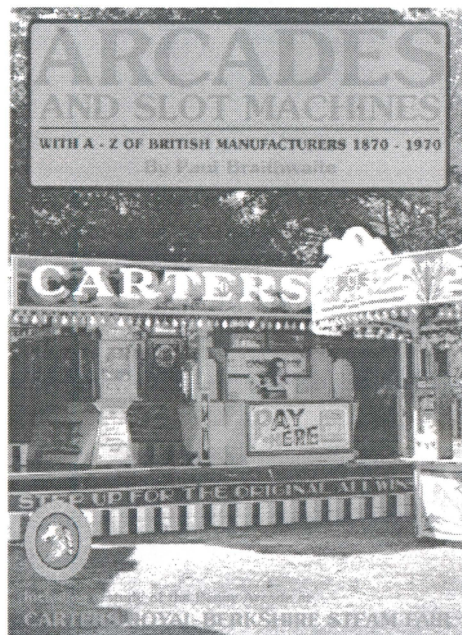
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